

JOSE HUIZAR COUNCILMEMBER, 14TH DISTRICT

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Long-Dormant Rialto Theatre on Broadway to House Urban Outfitters

Councilmember Huizar's Bringing Back Broadway announces the 1917 historic theater, vacant and in disrepair for many years, will soon serve as unique venue for national retailer

LOS ANGELES (MAY 2, 2013) – Councilmember José Huizar today announced that international retailer Urban Outfitters will revamp the historic Rialto Theatre as part of his Bringing Back Broadway initiative.

"Broadway's theaters and commercial office buildings offer a wide-range of business opportunities," said Councilmember Huizar. "Urban Outfitters understands the market and knows where Broadway is going, and I thank them for planting their flag and saying they want to be part of Bringing Back Broadway. We're looking forward to Urban Outfitters' Broadway debut."

Located at 812 S. Broadway, the two-story Rialto Theatre was designed for film by architect Oliver P. Dennis, and had a seating capacity of close to 900 when it opened in 1917. The theatre's marquee, which was modified in 1930, still remains the longest existing historic theatre marquee in Los Angeles. The Rialto has been vacant for decades and while the marquee remains, the theater's once beautifully intricate interior features have been lost to time.

The Urban Outfitters on Broadway will feature full-scale retail services of women's and men's fashion and lifestyle products, housewares and gifts. Restoration of the historic marquee is planned.

"We had been looking at Downtown L.A. for several years, watching what was happening and where. When we decided the time was right to open an Urban Outfitters, the Rialto Theatre on Broadway was the perfect location," said John Hauser, Urban Outfitters Chief Officer of Brand Experience. "The Rialto movie palace building still has incredible character – you can feel the history when you are there. Urban is excited to be on Broadway and to be part of the revitalization."

(more)

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Because the Rialto's formerly glorious historic interior had sadly been gutted through the years, even the most ardent historic theater advocates held little hope for its revitalization as an entertainment venue. Finding the right use, then, was a challenge that took time to address.

Councilmember Huizar's Executive Director of Bringing Back Broadway, Jessica Wethington McLean, worked with Urban Outfitters for almost a year as they secured the location and did due diligence on the project. Part of the process was developing a level of comfort about retail plans for the use of one of Broadway's historic theaters, in the context of an initiative which sees theaters as the anchors for revitalization.

Urban outfitters has demonstrated expertise with taking structures that have been neglected over time and transforming them, while enhancing and restoring historic fabric. Of particular interest was the retailer's work in Charleston, where Urban Outfitters purchased the Garden Theatre and transformed it into an active and vibrant retail store.

"We all know that the business of cinema has fundamentally changed, so in many cases we need to find new uses for historic theaters in order to keep them viable," said Linda Dishman, Executive Director of the Los Angeles Conservancy. "Fortunately, with such large interior spaces and iconic architectural features, theaters can be successfully adapted for new uses while keeping their authentic character."

Councilmember Huizar's Bringing Back Broadway, a 10-year initiative, is a multiapproach plan to restore and revitalize Broadway, the Historic Core and all of downtown, as well as return the beloved Streetcar Downtown.

The Urban Outfitters announcement punctuates a string of openings and new development announcements for Councilmember Huizar's Bringing Back Broadway initiative as the resurgent Broadway, once the City's retail and entertainment epicenter, is revitalized through both public and private investments.

Ace Hotel is under construction a few blocks down. Clifton's Cafeteria is undergoing a top to bottom renovation and will be reborn later this year as a full-scale entertainment and dining venue. Stockholm-based global fashion brand Acne has announced it will open a flagship store and signature café in Broadway's Eastern Columbia Building. Numerous restaurants, including Alma by noted chef Ari Taymor; Figaro Bistro by the Mgaieth family; UMAMIcatessen the multi-kitchen concept from L.A.'s venerable Umami Burger; and New York City's Two Boots Pizza have opened along the corridor, alongside new retailers, markets and boutiques, which enhance the corridor, lined with historic architecture and 12 theaters. One of those theaters, the Orpheum Theatre, hosts more than 200 shows a year and several other theaters have plans in the works for reactivation as entertainment venues. (more)

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On the public side, a Streetscape Master Plan for Broadway has been adopted. The Broadway Entertainment and Theatre District Community Design Overlay is in place. A façade lighting grant program is underway. The Historic Broadway Sign District plan is being drafted, as are regulations to help incentivize development in the upper floors of Broadway's buildings. In December, Downtown voters approved local funding for returning the streetcar downtown, and a three-decade operational plan was adopted by City Council based on a proposal championed by Councilmember Huizar.

More at <u>BringingBackBroadway.com</u> and <u>UrbanOutfitters.com</u>.

History on Broadway's Rialto Theatre can be found here: http://www.bringingbackbroadway.com/ARCHITECTURALGEMS/THEATERS/RIALTO/index.htm